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DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCE AND STATISTICS RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES

Thursday, Feb. 16
2 – 3 p.m. (CST)

Meeting Link: https://utsa.zoom.us/j/98500741960
Meeting ID: 985 0074 1960

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"Stopping the Revolving Door: An Empirical and Textual Study of Crowdfunding and Teacher Turnover"

Abstract

Organizations that provide better worker support have better worker retention. In K–12 public education, teachers commonly feel unsupported by their schools and districts as a result of the gap between top-down, one-size-fits-all resource allocation models and teachers' individual resource needs. In this study, we examine whether a recent trend in education—teacher crowdfunding platforms—effectively fills this gap and improves retention. We construct a novel dataset connecting teachers' employment data to their actions on the largest teacher crowdfunding platform, DonorsChoose, over a five-year period (2013-2014 to 2018-2019). We integrate textual analyses of teacher-written descriptions and empirical analyses of teacher turnover and attrition to provide the first evidence that crowdfunding improves teacher retention. We find funded projects on DonorsChoose significantly reduce attrition (leaving the public school system) rates of funded teachers by 1.7 percentage points (pp). Our textual analyses reveal that the effect on retention varies among projects. Resources which more substantially help teachers enact their professional identities as

teachers by personalizing their classrooms (i.e., furniture and classroom environment resources) and/or their teaching pedagogy (i.e., through a more creative use of resources) have the strongest effect: They significantly reduce both the likelihood a teacher leaves their current school (by 1.7–3.6 pp) and the likelihood a teacher leaves the public school system (by 1.8–2.4 pp). Our findings speak to the potential role of identity-relevant physical resources, and the new financial technologies that enable access to them, for improving worker retention more broadly.

Short Bio

Samantha Keppler is an Assistant Professor of Technology and Operations at the University of Michigan Stephen M. Ross School of Business. Her expertise is in the application of operations management theories to the education sector. Her research derives insights about how to improve education operations, or the management of human and material resources in public schools, educational nonprofits, and edtech companies. Professor Keppler earned her PhD in Industrial Engineering and Management Science from the McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science at Northwestern University. Prior to pursuing her PhD, she was a public high school math teacher for three years in the Bronx, New York.